

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Bradford On Tone Parish Council held on Tuesday 16 May 2023 on the rising of the Annual Parish Meeting, in the Chant Room Bradford on Tone Village Hall.

Present

Chair: Cllr D Venn

Councillors: C Ellis, G Robarts, and D Smith

In Attendance:

Miss J Norris (Clerk)

Somerset Councillor G Wren

11 members of the public attended the meeting.

125 Election of Chair

RESOLVED that Councillor D Venn be elected as the Chair of the Parish Council

126 Chair's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

The Chair signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chair of the Parish Council

127 Appointment of Vice Chair

RESOLVED that Councillor G Robarts be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Parish Council

128 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Sidhu.

129 Declarations of Interest/Dispensations

The following Declarations of Interest were made:

- Councillor Venn declared a personal interest in Agenda No 20 - Fishpass Update as some of the work being undertaken is on his land.

130 Minutes

- (i) The draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8 November 2022 were considered.

RESOLVED to confirm the draft minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2022 as a correct record.

- (ii) To approve the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14 March 2023

RESOLVED to defer consideration of the draft minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023 to enable longer reading time.

131 Public Participation

This agenda item allows members of the public present at the meeting to raise matters which are relevant to Bradford on Tone and / or the work of the Council.

The following matters were raised:

- The defibrillator seems to have been changed but it is not known by whom
- There is no further update on the Is there any news on the footpath diversion/ bridge - Cllr Wren will be looking into it

Chair's Initials

132 Reports from Somerset Council Councillors

Cllr Wren had nothing to report

133 Police Report for April 2023

The April police report was noted.

134 Insurance

Insurance arrangements were considered.

The Clerk was requested to speak to insurers about cover for the land on which the play area is situated as the insurance document is not clear on what cover is provided.

RESOLVED to renew the insurance cover with Zurich insurance

135 Items for payment

The Clerk presented invoices consideration and approval.

RESOLVED that the invoices detailed in the table below be approved for payment

Payee	Items	Invoice Date	Invoice No	Net	VAT	Total
Bradford On Tone Village Hall	Hire the Chant Room 14.03.2023	02.04.2023	06/2324	£9.00	0	£9.00
Zurich Insurance	Insurance	21.04.2023	523531700			£417.91
Mr E Ryan (Slashdotdash)	Website hosting	16.03.2023	INV-0119	£120.00		£120.00
Mr E Ryan (Slashdotdash)	.gov registration	16.03.2023	INV-0120	£156.00		£156.00
Churhyard Maintenance grant (see agenda 16)						
Donation to poppy Appeal _ re- imbursement				28.00		28.0
Other Payments						
Miss J Norris	Salary & associated costs for April and May					

136 Bank Reconciliations

The bank reconciliations for 2022/2023 were considered.

RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations.

137 Review of Internal Controls

The existing internal controls were reviewed.

RESOLVED to agree and confirm the internal controls as stated in the report.

138 General Reserves Policy

A General Reserves Policy was considered.

RESOLVED to approve and adopt the general Reserves Policy attached to these minutes as Appendix 1

Chair's Initials

139 Asset Register

The asset register was reviewed.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the existing items on the asset register as presented are detailed correctly
- (ii) that the play / trim trail equipment (value £23,265) and the coronation bench (located near the war memorial) should be included on the asset list.

140 Grants

Consideration was given the passporting and expenditure relating to grants from Somerset West and Taunton Council in 2022/23 and from Somerset Council in 2023/24

RESOLVED

- (i) That the grant from Somerset Council for the Churchyard is passed in its entirety to the Parochial Church Council
- (ii) That the Parochial Church Council be asked if the passported grant covers their costs and how any shortfall is funded with a view to considering making a further grant from the Parish Council.

141 New Dog Bin

There was discussion on the preferred location of new dog bin(s) and the associated expenditure.

The Clerk was requested to contact Somerset Council and find out the current situation regarding the provision of dog bins including the collection arrangements and charging, in particular are collections from dog and litter bins done / charged differently?

142 Planning Policy

Consideration was given to the, to the Ruishton and Thornfalcon Neighbourhood Development Plan.

RESOLVED not to make any comment on the Ruishton and Thornfalcon Neighbourhood Development Plan.

143 Update on Local Community Networks

Cllrs Venn and Smith had attended an information session on Local Community Networks and reported that it was an interesting, informal meeting with many of the Councils represented having similar priorities.

144 Fishpass Update

Cllr Venn will reported that the work to install a fishpass has started and will be completed between harvests.

145 History Project

A local resident is undertaking a history project about Bradford on Tone, this has been reported in the parish magazine.

The meeting closed at 21:20hrs

Chair's Signature & Date

Bradford On Tone Parish Council

Reserves Policy

Approved 16 May 2023

This policy sets out the Parish Council's stance regarding maintaining financial reserves

Agreed

1. Introduction

1.1 The Parish Council is required to maintain an adequate level of financial reserves to

- Protect against risk
- Ensure contingencies are in place
- Accumulate funds for known or planned policy initiatives or projects

1.2 Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires local authorities to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement.

1.2 The 2022 Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners Guide states *“as with any financial entity, it is essential that authorities have sufficient Reserves (general and earmarked) to finance both its day to day operations and future plans. Smaller authorities have no specific right to accumulate funds via the precept. All reserves should be reviewed and justified regularly (i.e. at least annually). It is good practice to transparently publish both the level and rationale of all reserves.”* (5.30 – 5.31)

1.3 The 2018 Good Councillors Guide to Finance and Transparency *“Local Councils need to hold an amount in reserves to meet unexpected expenditure, otherwise they could run out of money before the end of the financial year.....Local councils have no legal powers to hold revenue reserves other than for reasonable working capital or for specifically earmarked purposes,”* (p17)

1.4 There is no specified minimum level of reserves that an authority should hold.

2 Policy Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to enable the Parish Council to make financial decisions relating to expenditure and budget proposals whilst keeping the reserves at an appropriate level.

3 Types of Reserves

3.1 Bradford On Tone Parish Council intends to have two types of reserves earmarked reserves and general reserves.

3.2 Earmarked Reserves. (EMR)

Earmarked reserves are a way of accumulating funds (“saving”) for use in a later financial year to meet a known or planned policy initiative or for projects; such initiatives or projects may well incur expenditure over more than one financial year.

3.3 An EMR must be for a genuine purpose and separately identifiable.

3.4 Amounts in earmarked reserves are set by the Parish Council as part of the annual budget process.

3.5 If a specific EMR is no longer considered necessary, or the project has been completed and there is surplus in the EMR the Parish Council will decide how the balance in the EMR should be allocated.

3.6 EMRs will increase through decisions of the Parish Council and will decrease as they are spent on their specific purpose.

3.7 General Reserves

The purpose of the general reserves is

- to provide a contingency to minimise the possible financial impacts to the authority from situations such as emergencies, unforeseen events, ad hoc emerging issues

- to operate as a working balance to manage the impact of uneven cash flows.
- 3.8 The primary means of building the general reserve will be through reallocation of funds e.g. where a project comes in under budget or through an allocation from the precept.
- 3.9 Balancing the budget by drawing on reserves must be viewed as a legitimate short term option only.

4 Reserve Levels

General Reserve

4.1 The Good Councillors Guide to Finance and Transparency 2018 (p 17) says “A council should typically hold between 3 and 12 months expenditure as a general reserve. If the general reserve is too low then it may not be enough to cover unexpected expenditure or emergencies, whilst if the general reserve is too high then local electors have paid a tax which is not being used for the benefit of the local community.

Local councils have no legal powers to hold revenue reserves other than for reasonable working capital or for specifically earmarked purposes, therefore the year end general reserve should not be significantly higher than the annual precept.”

4.2 The 2022 Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners Guide states

“5.32 The general reserve of an authority comprises its cash flow and contingency funds to cover unexpected inflation, unforeseen events and unusual circumstances.

5.33. The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority’s general reserve is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure.

5.34. The reason for the wide range is to cater for the large variation in activity level between individual authorities. The smaller the authority, the closer the figure may be to 12 months expenditure, the larger the authority, the nearer to 3 months. In practice, any authority with income and expenditure in excess of £200,000 should plan towards 3 months equivalent general reserve.

5.35. In all of this it is important that each authority adopt, as a general reserve policy, the level appropriate to their size, situation, risks and plan their budget so as to ensure that the adopted level is maintained.

5.36. Authorities with significant self-generated income (other than the precept or levy) should take into account situations that may lead to a loss in revenue as well as increased costs and adapt their general reserve accordingly.” (5.32 – 5.36)

4.3 The Parish Council will set the level of general reserve to be maintained as part of the annual budget setting process. The level will

- Be between 3 months and 12 months expenditure
- Generally, will be maintained at approx. 9 months expenditure

Earmarked Reserves

4.4 The 2022 Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners Guide states

“There is, in practice, no upper or lower limit to EMR/CRRs save only that they must be held for genuine and identifiable purposes and projects, and their level should be subject to regular review and justification (at least annually and at budget setting), and should be separately identified and enumerated. Significant levels of EMRs in particular may give rise to enquiries from internal and/or external auditors.”

Bibliography

2022 Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners Guide

2018 The Good Councillors Guide

Agreed